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Nielsen to Step Down as KHPA Executive Director *Announces Plans to Return to Kansas University*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

(TOPEKA) – Dr. Marcia Nielsen, Ph.D., MPH, confirmed today that she intends to step down as Executive Director of the Kansas Health Policy Authority in July and return to the faculty of the University of Kansas Medical Center (KUMC).

Nielsen, who has headed the agency since 2006, will become Vice Chancellor of Public Policy and Planning, a position that involves directing public policy initiatives regarding health care policy, as well as planning and development of strategic initiatives to advance the mission of the university. She will also return to her faculty role within the Department of Health Policy and Management and serve as the Associate Director of Public Policy at the Institute for Public and Community Health.

“It has been an incredible honor to be part of helping build this new agency from the ground up,” Nielsen said of her work at KHPA. “It has also been exciting to work with the Kansas health care community and all of its stakeholders in trying to chart a course for the future of health policy in the state. This is an opportunity to continue working on the same kinds of things, but from a different perspective.”

KUMC Executive Vice Chancellor Dr. Barbara Atkinson said, “We are very excited to have Dr. Nielsen returning to the university. As the debate over health policy and health reform shifts back to Washington, we think it’s important for Kansas to have a strong voice. Dr. Nielsen has been an outstanding advocate for Kansans during her time at KHPA, and we look forward to having her put that passion to work at the university.”

From 2002 through 2006, Nielsen was a faculty member and assistant vice chancellor for health and public policy at KUMC. When the Kansas Health Policy Authority was established in 2005, she was appointed by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius to serve as the first board chair. She stepped down from KUMC in 2006 to accept the position as KHPA executive director.

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(more)

During her tenure at KHPA, Nielsen was instrumental in shaping the first two health policy agendas. Those agendas focused on expanding health care coverage for lower-income Kansans, improving public health by reducing tobacco use, and putting more emphasis on primary and preventive care by shifting to a “medical home” model of health care delivery.

Joe Tilghman, Chair of the KHPA Board voiced his regrets at Marci’s departure. “Marci has worked tirelessly for the last four years to set the KHPA on firm footing and she and the terrific team she has assembled at the KHPA have done just that. She has committed her career to public service and I am grateful for her dedicated leadership, but since we stole her from the KUMC, I guess they are stealing her back. I think her kids missed her too – I know she has missed them”.

Nielsen is a native of Nebraska. She received her undergraduate degree in biology and psychology from Briar Cliff College in Sioux City, Iowa, a master’s degree in public health from George Washington University, and a doctorate in health policy and management from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. She and her husband have twin 7 year old daughters and live in Lawrence.

The Kansas Health Policy Authority Board is expected to name an interim executive director when it meets Tuesday, May 19, at the KHPA office in Topeka.

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